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UNCLAS ABUJA 003270

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FOR INL A/S BEERS AND AF A/S KANSTEINER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SNAR NT

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NARCOTICS CERTIFICATION DISCUSSIONS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

1.(SBU) I understand that A/S Beers chaired a December 13 interagency meeting on the potential application of a new narcotics certification standard for those countries on the "majors" list, which includes Nigeria. From what we have heard, Nigeria was given the dubious distinction of joining Burma, Afghanistan and Haiti as those that might meet the new (lower) standard for decertification. While I understand that this was a preliminary, informal meeting, the new standard is now law (with the December 20th passing of the Foreign Operations Bill) and I am concerned about the predilection of some to condemn Nigeria, even after an unusually successful year of improvements on the law enforcement front. Let us not forget that a little over two years ago we did not even have a dialogue with the NDLEA on counter-narcotics issues.

2.(SBU) In the last 12 months, the GON has:

--increased funding for the NDLEA by 200 percent;

--introduced new money-laundering legislation and drafted additional legislative proposals to centralize and coordinate efforts to fight terrorism financing and financial crimes in line with the FATF;

--increased drug seizures by almost 80 percent over 2000;

--started the investigation of a major Nigeria-based trafficker in cooperation with DEA;

--effectively prevented drug trafficking on direct flights from Nigeria to the U.S., which resumed in February (while we note far greater U.S. Customs seizures of drugs from flights originating in Ghana);

--granted NDLEA access to Nigeria's sea ports - a long-standing USG demand;

--opened the NDLEA Training Academy in Jos, which will yield a higher degree of professionalism within the Agency (the first class of 248 cadets graduated December 20);

--opened a high-level law enforcement dialogue with the USG, covering the complete gambit of law enforcement issues (eight categories); and

--engaged the Financial Action Task Force in an effort to address the FATF's and USG's concerns on money laundering (this includes taking the initiative of sending an Attorney General-led delegation to Rome in early December to meet with the FATF's Africa and Middle East Review Group).

3.(SBU) Underscoring the vastly improved GON performance on drug control this year was a report I recently received from the DEA Attaché in Lagos: on December 13 the NDLEA unit at Murtala Mohammed International Airport made a 3.8 kilogram seizure of cocaine hidden in the false bottom of a suitcase belonging to a Rome-bound (via London on British Airways) passenger. The seizure marks the first made using one of the INL-donated Itemisers. Things have changed for the better. Nigeria deserves our congratulations and certification, not our condemnation and association with Burma and Afghanistan. Andrews